

Cities4Forests

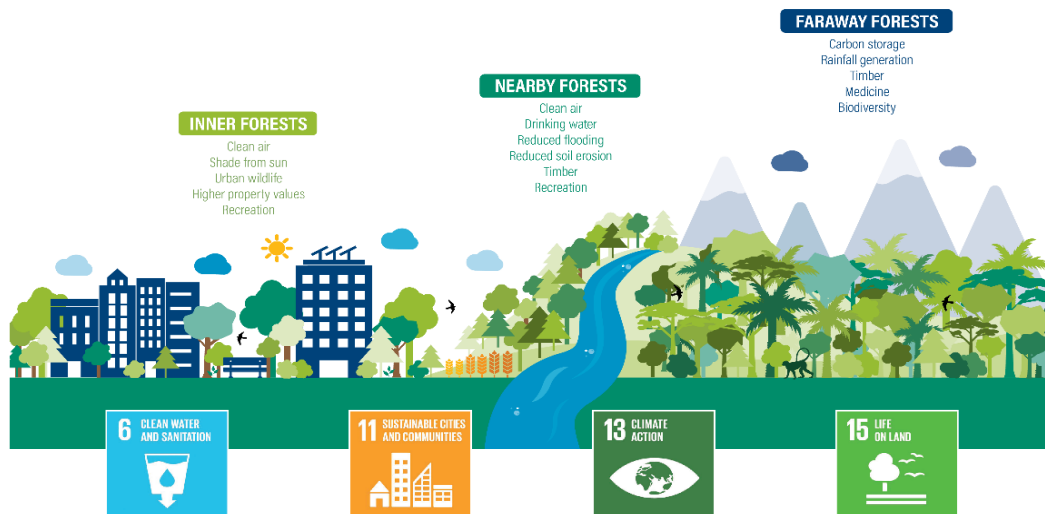
Leading cities partnering with forests to combat climate change, protect watersheds and biodiversity, and improve human well-being

#Cities4Forests

Why is a partnership between cities and forests needed?

Trees and forests are immensely valuable to cities and their citizens (Figure 1). Trees and forests provide multiple health benefits, sustain water resources, help to combat climate change, and protect global biodiversity. Specifically, trees within cities (the “inner forests”) clean the air, offset heat islands (and lower energy bills), and support human health and wildlife. Trees in watersheds surrounding cities (the “nearby forests”) contribute to cleaner air and drinking water, reduce flooding, and offer an escape from hectic urban life. And trees in the “faraway forests”—particularly in the tropics—sequester large amounts of carbon, generate rain for the world’s farm belts, provide a wealth of useful products, and host the majority of the world’s land-based biodiversity.

Figure 1 | Forests are of immense value to cities and help meet the Sustainable Development Goals



In return, cities can provide immense value to forests. Because urban areas are increasingly where people live and work, the public policies and procurement practices of cities—as well as the values, votes, and consumption patterns of citizens—have enormous potential to support the conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of forests. Many cities already support forests in some way, from parks and urban forest to “green infrastructure” and watershed management programs. Fewer, if any, have efforts to support the faraway forests that are vital for combating climate change.

Yet forests remain under threat. Each year, at least 5 million hectares (12.3 million acres) of forest—an area the size of Costa Rica—are permanently converted to other uses around the world, and many millions more are degraded. Forest loss and degradation contribute more than 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and have devastating impacts on local communities. Meanwhile, cities have become increasingly distant—both literally and figuratively—from the forests upon which they rely. Many citizens do not feel connected to forests, and city governments often fail to tap into forests as solutions to urban problems. As a result, too few cities are investing in forests as part of their strategies for addressing climate change, securing clean drinking

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water, improving public health, reducing air pollution, mitigating disaster risk, providing recreation, and meeting other urban development priorities.

What is Cities4Forests?

Cities4Forests is a movement to catalyze political, social, and economic support among city governments and urban citizens to integrate the inner, nearby, and faraway forests into city development plans and programs. Participants share an aspiration to help reduce deforestation, restore forests (including more trees in cities), and manage forests more sustainably. Our goal is to amplify current best practices and extend the deliberate city-forest relationship to the global scale on which cities and forests interact.

Cities4Forests is a voluntary coalition involving mayors' offices— and supported by other subnational agencies such as public water utilities and offices of sustainability—from around the world. Cities4Forests encourages peer-to-peer inspiration and learning, and members receive technical support from institutions with expertise in forests, climate change, water, communications, finance, and policy.

What will Cities4Forests do?

Cities4Forests provides the forum, relationships, and technical support for better linking cities and forests. Convenings of Cities4Forests “piggyback” on existing meetings where urban political leaders and sustainability professionals are already attending (e.g. the World Urban Forum, C40 and/or ICLEI meetings). This approach minimizes costs and the addition of “yet another event” to attend. During each convening, Cities4Forests provides content for city strategies, offers technical assistance, conducts trainings on tools, showcases successes, identifies how to overcome challenges, makes milestone public announcements, provides a scientific evidence base for the benefits of forests to cities, and more.

Between convenings, the Cities4Forests secretariat and delivery partners offer one-on-one engagement and assistance as needed. Cities can engage in one or more working groups (one on inner forests, one on nearby forests, and one on faraway forests) to delve deeper into thematic issues, challenges, and opportunities alongside peers who share the same interests.

Cities4Forests is designed to “turbo-charge” existing city efforts around forests by injecting additional energy, facilitating access to resources, and helping cities learn from the best in class to take bold new steps. Cities4Forests is complementary to—not competitive with—existing efforts. It bridges silos within city governments (mayor’s office, sustainability office, city parks office, municipal water utility), while also bridging silos between existing efforts. And it fills remaining gaps, such as the role of faraway forests as part of city climate change action plans and sustainable wood purchasing.

What are the offers?

By joining Cities4Forests, cities will have exclusive access to the following offers. Cities can choose to engage in all of them or just those that fill gaps in their portfolio. These offers include:

- A forum for peer-to-peer learning and for getting engaged with initiatives that meet city needs.
- Assistance conducting a “footprint” analysis that identifies a city’s impacts and dependencies on forests (urban, nearby, and faraway), prioritizes which are “hotspot” issues, and quantifies the benefits.

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- A database that helps cities identify the tools, initiatives, and research already available on city/forest issues, and guidance on how to select those most appropriate to a city's needs.
- Identification of and introductions to financing sources (domestic/international, public/private).
- A citizen engagement and communications package including messaging, digital media, photo exhibitions, educational material, and other communication tools.
- Invitation to compete in the annual "Cities4Forests" award event.

Regarding inner forests (urban trees)

- Access to sources of technical assistance and programs on how to implement or expand urban tree programs and increase citizen involvement.
- User-friendly geospatial tools for calculating greenhouse gas emissions and sinks from trees as part of the city's greenhouse gas accounting inventory.
- Location planning guide and "benefits calculator" for air quality, stormwater management, heat island mitigation, and other urban development goals.

Regarding nearby forests

- Economic analyses to justify when, where, and how to invest in forests ("natural infrastructure") to secure drinking water, mitigate flood risk, create recreation opportunities, etc.
- Technical assistance, case examples, and peer-to-peer visits for source-water protection programs.
- Guidance on how to access financing for implementation (e.g., Water Funds, Forest Resilience Bonds).

Regarding faraway forests

- Connections to networks of communities and organizations practicing sustainable forest management around the world.
- Toolkit to help a city select a "sister forest" and to design a program for mutual engagement and benefit (e.g., procurement preference for sustainable products from that forest, student exchange and eco-tourism programs, and the purchase of voluntary carbon credits from that forest to help the city meet its greenhouse gas emissions targets).
- Guidance and research on certified sustainable wood procurement for city infrastructure (e.g., benches, boardwalks and landscape elements, as well as new "mass timber" buildings).
- Assistance helping cities meet their climate commitments via sourcing sustainably certified, forest-based carbon credits or other strategies.

What's in it for cities?

Cities4Forests would yield many benefits to city governments and their citizens, including:

- Climate solutions
 - Contribute to climate commitments. For instance, trees and forests may provide low-cost options to close greenhouse gas emissions gaps and achieve carbon neutrality. Engagement in the initiative could support the efforts of the recent "emissions neutral by 2050" commitment by a group of C40 members. Likewise, engagement could help cities start to address the large

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amount of emissions arising from outside city boundaries, as recently identified in the C40 report, *Consumption-based GHG Emissions of C40 Cities*.

- Simplified way for local businesses to meet their climate and sustainability commitments.
- Contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those on water (SDG 6), cities (SDG 11), climate (SDG 13), and forests (SDG 15).
- Financial and natural resource security
 - More sustainable public wood procurement.
 - More secure water supplies and lower drinking-water treatment costs.
 - Sources of domestic and international public/private financing identified, and doors opened.
- Citizen well-being
 - Increased citizen understanding of the importance of trees and forests to their lives (e.g., source of clean drinking water, recreation value, role in climate stabilization).
 - Increased forest-based recreation, wildlife, and aesthetics for citizens.
 - Decreased exposure to disaster risks such as flooding, landslides, and fires.
 - Cleaner air, lower energy bills, better local climate regulation, and more.
- Public profile
 - Recognition as a regional and global leader on high-priority issues of our generation.
 - Media coverage of progress and accomplishments.
 - Education and cultural opportunities that engage youth and adults.
 - Bridge the urban-rural divide, and create opportunities to work with indigenous communities, in forest areas and in cities.
 - Greater city pride and public profile on the world stage.

What does a city need to do to join?

- Endorse a political statement on the importance of forests to cities, how cities can help forests, and your intent to join Cities4Forests (to be announced at the Global Climate Action Summit, September 2018).
- Engage in at least one of the urban, nearby, or faraway “offer” areas above, and seek to expand your engagement over time.
- Be willing to share your experiences, challenges, and projects with peers.
- Identify one or more points of contact who will engage in Cities4Forests. Points of contact can come from the mayor’s office, public water utility office, sustainable development office, parks and recreation office, or others. A city can have more than one point of contact.

What does it cost to join?

Participation in Cities4Forests is free. If enough cities join by September 2018, a philanthropic donor(s) has expressed interest in supporting a secretariat that will manage the initiative and delivery partners that can provide technical support to cities. Cities will be responsible for paying for their own staff time. For cities facing financial constraints, a limited budget will be available to cover transportation costs for some of their representatives to attend Cities4Forests events.